United Nations S/2018/1055

Security Council

Distr.: General
4 December 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 28 November 2018 from the from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fifty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018) (S/2018/1041).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again expresses its regret that the authors of the reports of the Secretary-General continue to take a negative and politicized approach to the Syrian Arab Republic and its institutions. They continue to make the same errors involving major departures from their mandate, and they continue to wilfully disregard the comments, concerns and questions raised by the Syrian Arab Republic about previous Secretariat reports.

The Syrian Arab Republic has concluded that the present report, despite some positive aspects reflected in some paragraphs, is replete with errors and does not address the real humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic or what Syrians need to alleviate their suffering and harsh conditions and strengthen their resilience. The Syrian Government reiterates that continued adherence to this politicized approach when preparing these reports, which only serves to further the agendas of certain influential States in the Security Council and their proxies in the region, will harm the Secretariat's reputation and credibility.

What follows is an overview of the position of the Syrian Government with respect to the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the report under consideration.

- Just as in the previous report, the Secretariat continues to claim, astonishingly, that the Syrian Government did not approve the bimonthly convoy plan for September and October. The truth, as we pointed out in our response to the fifty-sixth report, is that the Government asked the United Nations to include areas from which armed terrorist groups have been expelled and which have returned to the control of the Syrian State, but which the United Nations had originally classified as besieged or hard-to-reach, in the monthly regular programme for aid delivery (S/2018/965).

- The report provides indirect political cover for military operations being carried out by the United States-led international coalition against civilians in several areas in the Dayr al-Zawr countryside. It describes them in more than one

Please recycle

paragraph as "military operations" against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, when the truth is that the attacks have resulted in the deaths of dozens of Syrian civilians, mostly women and children. We have already documented that in a number of identical letters sent by the Syrian Government to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. In our response to the fifty-sixth report, we drew attention to crimes already committed against innocent Syrian civilians by the illegitimate United States-led international coalition. On 13 and 14 October 2018, that coalition's aircraft dropped internationally prohibited white phosphorus bombs on residential homes in the city of Hajin in Dayr al-Zawr governorate. On 19 October 2018, they bombed residential homes in the villages of Susah and Albu Badran in the southern countryside of Dayr al-Zawr governorate. On 12 November 2018, in continuation of its systematic targeting of civilians, the international coalition perpetrated a new crime against the village of Hajin. It also attacked Sha'fah and other villages in rural Dayr al-Zawr governorate, killing and injuring more than 60 Syrian civilians. Contrary to what the report says about those operations being directed against the ISIL terrorist organization, they are in fact war crimes and crimes against humanity. They demonstrate, once again, that the States of the coalition have no regard for international law and international humanitarian law, and in particular the principles of discrimination and proportionality.

- Following up the report's reference to the discovery of a mass grave containing 1,000 bodies in the city of Raqqah, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic can confirm that a number of mass graves were found in the city of Raqqah containing more than four thousand bodies, mostly of women, children and the elderly. Those graves were discovered under the rubble left behind by the bombing of Raqqah by international coalition forces. A mass grave was also discovered in an agricultural field next to the Children's Hospital and the National Hospital containing the remains of 2,500 women, children and elderly persons, in addition to the mass grave was discovered in the Panorama area that holds the remains of more than 1,500 civilians who were killed when the international coalition bombarded Raqqah city under the pretext of liberating it from terrorism. We note that that bombardment occurred after coalition forces had evacuated the ISIL terrorists whose safety the coalition was concerned about and transferred them to Dayr al-Zawr Governorate to fight the Syrian Arab Army and finish carrying out the coalition's plan to undermine, in cooperation with allied terrorist groups and militias, the unity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- The Syrian Arab Republic is astonished that the authors insist on inflating the importance of isolated incidents in certain parts of Syria and cite false information and statistics (such as claims about attacks on hospitals and schools) that are sourced largely from the armed terrorist groups themselves. Meanwhile, the Secretariat and its sources intentionally neglect to inform Member States, by way of example, that incidents involving car bombs, attacks on aid workers and improvised explosive devices, which, as the report states, occur mostly in Idlib governorate (paragraphs 5 and 21), are being carried out by armed terrorist groups, which are called "non-State armed opposition groups" in the report, in violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

- Paragraph 27 notes that the Syrian Government approved all requests made by the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund, each within its competence, whether for the transport of food, relief items and livelihood kits, or health-care and immunization services. The report provides

statistics on children's access to education services, protection and psychological/social support services, and the millions of people receiving food assistance. None of this would be happening without the facilities being provided to United Nations agencies by the Syrian Government out of its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to all its citizens without discrimination wherever they may be within the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- We confirm that from the beginning of October through 26 November 2018, United Nations agencies submitted 45 entry visa applications of which 37, or 82 per cent, were approved. Five applications are pending and three were rejected. During that same period, United Nations agencies submitted 92 applications for residence permit renewals, of which all were approved.

- With regard to the situation in the Rukban camp, the Syrian Government reiterates the information provided in its response to the previous report. It emphasizes that because of approvals and facilities granted by the Syrian Government, the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were able to send a humanitarian assistance convoy to Rukban camp between 3 and 8 November 2018. It wishes to make clear that the only reason that convoy needed to be arranged in the first place is that the United States of America is occupying part of Syrian territory, and would not accept arrangements for a humanitarian corridor to the camp. In the past, the United States has tried to block such convoys on various grounds, including the security situation. We also wish to point out that the Syrian Government acted to protect the convoy up to the 55 km mark from threats posed by the ISIL terrorist organization and other terrorist groups that are deployed in the Tanf area with the support and protection of the United States of America. Moreover, the United States entrusted the responsibility of protecting the convoy to an armed terrorist group allied with it. As a result, there are no guarantees that the assistance will be delivered to people in need in the camp. In the light of the foregoing, the United Nations must provide a detailed report on how assistance was distributed in the camp, including who and how many were the recipients, and who was in charge of the distributing.

- The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes the need for increased international humanitarian support in order to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Syrians, especially given the current level of international financing, which, to date, stands at 57.5 per cent of what is needed. In their review conferences, donors have tied their funding pledges to political conditions that are incompatible with the principles of humanitarian work. In particular, they refuse to fund the rehabilitation of basic service facilities that could help strengthen the resilience of Syrians and support the return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to their areas in a safe and dignified manner. Despite their importance, the authors of the report ignore those issues and conditions, thereby demonstrating that they do not take the humanitarian situation in Syria seriously enough.

- The Syrian Arab Republic regrets that the authors of the report, in conformity with the instructions of certain Western States, are continuing to misguidedly promote cross-border assistance, which has been proven to be ineffective (paragraph 29). It has been established that it is impossible to ensure that such assistance reaches its rightful civilian beneficiaries. In fact, such assistance, one way or another, constitutes indirect support for the terrorists, especially when a large proportion of such operations are happening at the Syrian-Turkish border and are being channelled toward areas under the control of armed terrorist groups that commandeer that assistance and then distribute it to their members

and their families. The officials in charge of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have been unable to maintain standards of transparency and provide the guarantees necessary to reassure the international community that cross-border assistance is going to the rightful beneficiaries, rather than to the armed groups. In paragraph 29, the authors unfortunately refer to the same vague ideas that appear in previous reports of the Secretariat concerning so-called partners and independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations to verify that assistance is reaching the right storage facilities and recipients. Such ideas and references are unacceptable. No United Nations official has ever discussed them with the Syrian Government, which is the primary party concerned. They also flagrantly contravene Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), and those who propagated and implemented those ideas bear full responsibility at the international level. The Syrian Government once again demands that the United Nations should supply it with the names and records of the parties that are supposed to be acting as United Nations partners. It also looks forward to the information and clarification that the Secretariat was requested to provide under Security Council resolution 2393 (2017).

- The Syrian Arab Republic once again expresses its rejection of the continuing illegitimate and irresponsible practice on the part of the authors of the report and officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of using the term "non-State armed opposition" to refer to the ISIL and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham terrorist organizations, even though the authors are well aware that those two organizations appear on the Security Council lists relating to the Al-Qaida terrorist organization and associated individuals and entities. Those two organizations have links with numerous terrorist groups deployed in Syria.

- The Syrian Arab Republic once again stresses that the Secretariat, when preparing its reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria, should use experts who are capable of choosing their terminology without bias and in a manner that takes into account legal considerations and is professional and objective. Otherwise, Secretariat reports on the implementation of United Nations resolutions will turn into mouthpieces for the wishes of certain Western States that have adopted extremist and hostile positions with respect to the Syrian State. On the subject of designations, my Government is still surprised that, in their reports, the authors' have repeatedly failed to explicitly describe ISIL, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and their affiliated and allied organizations as terrorist.

- The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its call upon the Secretariat to pressure the States and entities that have imposed coercive unilateral measures on the Syrian people to lift them immediately. The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the continued imposition of those measures is the primary obstacle to ensuring the basic needs of the Syrian people, improving their humanitarian and living conditions, and putting in place the necessary conditions for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and the restoration of normal life. The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the continued failure by the authors of the report to address this important issue as something that can only be described as "irresponsible conduct and a clear sign of lack of professionalism", and constitutes an unacceptable failure to respect the principles of humanitarian work and carry out such work impartially and objectively.

- In the report under consideration, the authors endeavour to blur mandates and competences by discussing the political situation and by using numerous politicized terms. The Syrian Arab Republic rejects that approach. Such terms

have nothing to do with the authors' mandate or the topic of the report, which is supposed to be about the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to stop issuing these monthly reports, which many see as a waste of time, money and human resources, and replace them with quarterly reports that are written in a professional and credible manner.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.